

Given the significance of the day, it is perhaps fitting that we are considering the budget conference report. That package includes \$1.35 trillion in tax relief for all American taxpayers. With this tax relief, they can begin to earn for themselves a little sooner, and to plan for their priorities and their needs a little earlier.

In fact, current forecasts—under the assumption that there are no changes in the tax laws—have National Tax Freedom Day in 2011 falling on May 10. But, if the Bush tax relief package were passed, that date would be pulled back to May 5. In Washington terms, where we throw around numbers in the millions, billions, and trillions everyday, five days may not seem like much. But, to the family living paycheck to paycheck or trying to set aside a little bit in personal savings for the future, it means a lot.

It is in their honor, Mr. Speaker, that I am pleased to support efforts to let them keep more of their hard-earned money in their own homes, and to support the \$1.35 trillion in tax relief in our Fiscal Year 2002 budget.

FORT OSAGE

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the importance of Fort Osage as a landmark identified and later developed by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark during the voyage of the Corps of Discovery.

In June of 1804, the Corps of Discovery passed a high bluff on the Missouri River—which would later become Fort Osage in Jackson County, Missouri. Only four years later, Clark returned to initiate construction on a Fort and trading-house under the direction of the War Department. Clark noted “The River could be completely defended” and he deemed the “situation elegant.”

Fort Osage (or Fort Clark as it was originally named) played an important role in the exploration and development of the West. Goods were traded with the Osage, Ayaaway and Kansas tribes at this site for years to come. Fort Osage proved to be the single most profitable trading post of its kind in the United States and the territories. We are indebted to the legacy of the Fort and the people who lived, worked and defended the Fort. Their courage had a profound effect on the evolution of our nation.

As part of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration, Jackson County Parks and Recreation is proposing an innovative education center. The education center would showcase artifacts and exhibit the significance of the Missouri River. I believe this education center is a wonderful addition to the commemoration and will help visitors understand the significance of Fort Osage. It is the only site along the trail where Clark returned to develop a facility that fulfilled the goals of President Thomas Jefferson’s dream of commerce and development with the west.

The significance of Fort Osage is not limited to Lewis and Clark. Both the Yellowstone Ex-

pedition and the Long Expedition visited the Fort in 1819. The Long Expedition brought the first steamboat, Western Engineer. Only years later, William Becknell arrived at Fort Osage, using the site as mile marker “0” for the Santa Fe trail, again distinguishing the importance of the Fort in relation to commerce in the west.

Due to the area’s historical significance, the Fort Osage Education Center was proposed as part of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration. The Education Center was recently recognized by the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission as the priority project in Missouri and I am honored to have this historical site in my district. I look forward to the events surrounding the bicentennial commemoration at Fort Osage and in other areas of the 6th District of Missouri. I join the Missouri Bicentennial Commission, the Missouri Department of Conservation and the United States Geological Survey in full support of the proposed Fort Osage Education Center.

RESOLUTION ON KALMYK SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a resolution congratulating the Kalmyk people in the United States on the fiftieth anniversary of their settlement in this country. The resolution also encourages continuing scholarly and educational exchanges between the Russian Federation and the United States to encourage better understanding and appreciation of the Kalmyk people and their contributions to the history and culture of both countries.

The Kalmyks were originally an ethnic Mongolian nomadic people who have inhabited the Russian steppes for around 400 years. The present Kalmyk Republic of the Russian Federation is located north of the Caspian sea in southern Russia. During World War II, the Kalmyk people were one of the seven “punished peoples” exiled en masse by Stalin to “special settlements” in Siberia and Central Asia for allegedly collaborating with the Nazis. There were about 170,000 deportees. After World War II, several hundred Kalmyks who managed to escape the Soviet Union were held in Displaced Persons camps in Germany. For several years, they were not allowed to emigrate to the United States because of prejudice against their Mongolian ethnicity.

However, on July 28, 1951, the Attorney General of the United States issued a ruling which cleared the way for the Kalmyk people in the Displaced Persons camps in Germany to enter the United States. In the fifty years since their arrival, the Kalmyk emigres and their descendants have survived and prospered. Moreover, they are the first community of Tibetan Buddhists to settle in the United States. While adapting to much of America’s diverse and modern culture, the Kalmyk have also sought to preserve their own unique traditions. Many continue to practice the Tibetan Buddhist religion.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kalmyk community of the United States has

been able to re-establish contact with the Kalmyk people in the Russian Federation. For the past ten years, a wide exchange has been developed between relatives, students and professionals.

Mr. Speaker, our country is so much richer for the presence of our Kalmyk-American citizens. I urge my colleagues to join me and my colleagues Mr. HOYER, Mr. PITTS, Mr. CARDIN, Mr. WAMP, and Mr. HASTINGS, in congratulating the Kalmyk-American community on the fiftieth anniversary of their settlement in the United States by cosponsoring and supporting this resolution.

IN HONOR OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC TECHNICAL DIRECTORATE COMMANDOS FAMILY TORRANCE, CA

HON. LORETTA SANCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Ms. SANCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to pay tribute to a very extraordinary group of members who are being commemorated for the Presidential Unit Citation. These heroic members of the Strategic Technical Directorate Commandos Family passionately and diligently sacrificed their lives for “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” for the people of Southeast Asia.

During the Vietnam War, the people of Southeast Asia and the fighting soldiers of the United States faced many challenges that jeopardized their lives. But in 1964, the Strategic Technical Directorate (the U.S. joint services command) was created to help the U.S. and Southeastern Asian soldiers to fight for freedom. The Strategic Technical Directorate included the best selected group of officers. The members showed their intelligence, commitment, and bravery in combat. They selflessly risked their own lives in hopeless situations to save others. For example, in 1974, the North Vietnamese Army attacked the city of Phuoc Long. 250 Airborne Rangers came to the rescue, but they faced brutal assaults from the North Vietnamese Army and lost contact with the Strategic Technical Directorate. After a four-day search, the Strategic Technical Directorate found only 50 percent of their surviving members in the city. Another example is during April 1975. The Strategic Technical Directorate’s Special Missions Services went to the city of Phan Rang, where the North Vietnamese were attacking the city. 100 of their additional commandos were captured by the North Vietnamese Army. Then the remaining Strategic Technical Directorate units went to defend Saigon. By the final days of April, the North Vietnamese Army surrounded the capital. The Strategic Technical Directorate did not give up. 500 SMS commandos, the headquarters personnel, and the Liaison Service barged in and fought until capitulation on April 30. These two examples prove how the members of STD risked their lives and put 100 percent of their diligence and commitment in winning the freedom for Southeast Asia.

The members of the Strategic Technical Directorate Commandos Family will not be forgotten, but be remembered and honored, for

their survival, courage, and dedication in fighting for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." They risked their lives to help the people of Southeast Asia because they were in danger and had their human rights taken away. I ask you to join me today in recognizing these heroic figures who proved to us the meaning of bravery and diligence.

VAISAKHI DAY

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 8, 2001

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the Sikhs recently celebrated their important holiday of Vaisakhi Day. It is the 302nd birthday of the Sikh Nation. On Vaisakhi Day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the Sikh gurus, formed the Khalsa Panth. He blessed them with the blessing "Raj Kare Ga Khalsa," which means, "the Khalsa shall rule."

The Sikhs consider Vaisakhi a very important holiday. It is effectively the Sikh national holiday. As this Vaisakhi Day passed, however, the Sikh Nation still lives in slavery.

Sikhs ruled Punjab from 1765 to 1849. They ran a secular state with religious tolerance. Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus participated in the government. When the British vacated the subcontinent, the Sikhs were to receive sovereign power, but they were taken in by the false promises of Nehru and Gandhi that they would have freedom in Punjab. No Sikh representative has ever signed the Indian constitution, and many Sikhs are demanding their independence, as declared on October 7, 1987. Although they seek this peacefully, India considers anyone who speaks out for a separate Sikh state, called Khalistan, to be a "terrorist." Instead, it is India that has used the tools of terrorism.

A new report from the Movement Against State Repression shows that the Indian government holds, by its own admission, at least 52,268 political prisoners under the illegal and expired "Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act," called TADA. Both the Movement Against State Repression and Amnesty International have confirmed that tens of thousands of political prisoners are being held without charge or trial. Some of them have been in jail since 1984. According to The Politics of Genocide by respected human-rights worker Inderjit Singh Jaijee, the Indian government since 1984 has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs. They join thousands of Christians, Muslims, Dalits, and others who have been killed at the hands of the Indian government.

In the spirit of Vaisakhi, the U.S. Congress should support freedom for the Sikh Nation and the other nations of South Asia who are seeking their sovereignty and independence. We must support a free and fair plebiscite in Punjab, Khalistan, on the question of independence and also plebiscites for Kashmir, as India promised in 1948, for Nagalim, and for all the nations living under Indian occupation. We should also cut off American aid until India learns to respect its own laws and the basic human rights of all people. Let the Sikhs, celebration of Vaisakhi remind us that the freedom is the birthright of all peoples and nations.

COUNCIL OF KHALISTAN,

Washington, DC, April 16, 2001.

OPEN LETTER TO THE SIKH NATION: POLITICAL PRISONERS SHOULD RUN IN ELECTIONS FORM KHALSA RAJ PARTY, START A STANTMAI MORCHA TO FREE KHALISTAN

Several reports, including a recent one from Amnesty International, confirm that tens of thousands of Sikh political prisoners are being held in illegal detention in India without charge or trial. Democracies do not hold political prisoners, yet tens of thousands of political prisoners are being held in "the world's largest democracy."

Recently, 19 Members of the U.S. Congress wrote to President Bush asking him to get involved in the effort to secure freedom for these political prisoners. These political prisoners are being held for peaceful activities in support of a sovereign, independent Khalistan and/or activities in support of human rights. Some of these political prisoners have been held since 1984. We must secure their freedom.

Sovereignty is essential to the survival of the Sikh Nation. As long as we live under Indian rule, these political prisoners will continue to be held and we will all continue to live as slaves. The only way that Sikhs can live in freedom is to liberate our homeland. Self-determination is the right of all peoples and nations.

We must tell the Indian government that we demand our freedom. In order to do so, the political prisoners should run for Parliament and for the Legislative Assembly under the banner of the Khalsa Raj Party. The primary plank of the Khalsa Raj Party should be freedom for Khalistan. The Khalsa Panth must be prepared to pay any price, whatever it may be, to free ourselves from the occupation of the Indian government.

We must have a full and fair plebiscite on the status of Khalistan and we must launch a Shantmai Morcha to liberate Khalistan. If the political prisoners run for office, Sikhs will have someone to vote for who is committed to freedom. None of the current parties will make any effort to liberate Khalistan.

If the political prisoners will not run for office from their jail cells, then their family members should be given the Khalsa Raj Party ticket in the elections. We must have a real choice that will allow us to demand our freedom. Only then can we make any difference. Let us vote for a free Khalistan, not just for a change of faces among the oppressors.

Guru Gobind Singh Sahib gave sovereignty to the Khalsa Panth. "In Grieb Sikhian Ko Deon Patshahi", that is "Khalsa shall rule and is sovereign." Guru gave the Sikh Nation sovereignty. Nations that do not have sovereignty perish. Nations that do not have political power vanish from the face of the Earth. Sikhs are instructed to remain free always. It is time to reclaim freedom that is our birthright. In a free Khalistan Sikhs will enjoy freedom and respect the world over. For the survival of Sikh Nation, we must regain our lost sovereignty. It is our duty as Sikhs.

The present Akali government and its leadership is corrupt to its bone. The Akalis are in alliance with the militant Hindu fundamentalist BJP, which has recently been rocked by a corruption scandal as well. They are agents of the Indian government. They take their orders from Delhi rulers. They lie to the Sikh Nation. We must discard them now and replace them with a new committed, honest, pro-Khalsa Panth leadership.

As instructed by the Guru, Banda Singh Bahadar established the first Khalsa Raj in

1710 after the complete destruction of city of Sirhand where the two younger sons of Guru Sahib were beheaded after immobilizing them in a wall. Sikhs regained political power in the second half of the 18th century and ruled Punjab until the mid-19th century. It was the Golden Age of Punjab. Under the rule of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, all the people living in Punjab shared power. Muslims, Hindus, and Christians were ministers in his government. The people of Punjab were treated equally and fairly. Justice was done without any prejudice to anyone. All citizens of Punjab were equal partners in the administration of Khalsa Raj. The same principle of justice, fairness, and equality will be the foundation stones of a sovereign, independent Khalistan and Khalistan will be free from bribes.

In 1947, when India was divided, the cunning and deceitful Hindu leadership of Nehru and Gandhi promised that Sikhs would have the glow of freedom in Punjab and that no law affecting Sikh rights would be passed without Sikh consent. As soon as the transfer of power had occurred and India was free, those promises were broken. Instead, India began its effort to wipe out the Sikh people, the Sikh Nation, and the Sikh religion. The Home Ministry even sent a circular to the deputy commissioners of Punjab saying that Sikhs are "a criminal tribe" and should be carefully watched. Since independence, Sikhs have been persecuted, betrayed, robbed of their natural resources, and discriminated against. We must stand up against the oppressors and say enough is enough. We will no longer live under your oppressive regime.

Badal did not even fulfill the promises he made before the election. How can they call themselves an Akali government when more than 50,000 people have been tortured, murdered, declared unidentified, and cremated by the police? There is no accountability for them and no police official has been punished. How can they call themselves an Akali government when they have not punished Swaran Singh Ghotna, the murderer of Jathedar Gurdev Singh Kaunke, and the other police officers who kidnapped and murdered human-rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra? With a Khalsa Raj Party and with the political prisoners elected, these people can be brought to justice.

In pursuit of its divide and rule strategy, the Indian government has murdered over 250,000 Sikhs in their effort to create fear psychosis and destroy the Sikh freedom movement. Tens of thousands of Sikh youth are being held as political prisoners without charge or trial. Recently, it has tried to set the Sikhs and the Kashmiri Muslims against each other by creating incidents between the communities. Over 20,000 people were murdered in Delhi alone after Indira Gandhi's assassination. So far, the perpetrators of these heinous crimes roam free in Delhi. The Khalsa Raj Party must demand accountability for the perpetrators of these atrocities.

After the Golden Temple attack in June 1984 by the Indian government it was clear to the Sikhs that the Indian government is determined to destroy Sikhism completely. The attack on the Golden Temple was conducted to crush the Sikh aspirations of Khalsa Raj. It doesn't matter whether Congress or the BJP runs the government. Former Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar said that there is no difference between Congress and the BJP. He is right. The party label on the Hindu majority does not matter. Congress and BJP are equally anti-Sikh. Only a Khalsa Raj Party will work to break the cycle of tyranny and oppression.